

FWP COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM COVER SHEET

Meeting Date: December 9, 2010

Agenda Item: Yellowstone River State Park – Appeal of Proposed Campground Development

Division: Parks

Time Needed on Agenda for this Presentation: 60 minutes

Background

The 200-acre Yellowstone River State Park property is located about 30 miles east of Billings. The property was purchased in 2008. The original site acquisition included the planned management of the greater property as a Wildlife Management Area and a State Park.

An Environmental Assessment was issued in early 2010 for a proposed campground development on the property. The basics of the proposed campground included about 32 camp stalls, vault latrines, camp-host pads, some electrified sites, water hydrants, and trees. In addition to written comments, a public meeting was held in Billings in May. A Decision Notice was issued to proceed with the project in June. Following the Decision Notice, the proposed project was appealed to the two internal FWP review levels: (1) at the Regional level, and (2) to the Director's Office. The decision to proceed with the project has been upheld, in both appeals. The final level of appeal is to the FWP Commission.

Five individuals have standing and have chosen to appeal FWP's decision to the FWP Commission. Copies of the three levels of appeals submitted by each appellant have been provided for the FWP Commission's review. The appeals are based upon several issues, including: fire danger, access-road traffic, increased public use, and the perceived disturbance that will result with having a public campground near a WMA.

FWP believes the proposed campground will be a positive improvement to the park and will provide needed public camping in the Billings area. Additionally, FWP believes impacts can be reasonably mitigated, just as they are and have been at other State Parks throughout Montana.

Public Involvement Process & Results

There was a 50-day public comment period for the EA in March-May 2010. For the public comment period, 33 written comments were received. A total of 10 individuals were supportive of the project and 23 opposed the project. Since that time, appeals to the decision to proceed with the project have occurred, first at the Regional level and finally to the FWP Director in October 2010.

Alternatives and Analysis

- Alternative 1 – proceed with the campground project as currently planned at Yellowstone River State Park.
- Alternative #2 – do not proceed with the proposed campground development at the site.

Agency Recommendation & Rationale

FWP recommends that the commission uphold the previous decisions made to proceed with the development of a basic campground at the Yellowstone River State Park site.

Proposed Motion

"I move that the FWP Commission uphold FWP's decision and plans to develop a public campground at Yellowstone River State Park".